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Effect of Warnings to Peking Studied

By Norton Mintz
Staff Reporter

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Four top U.S. experts on Asian affairs fear that a war no one wants could result from a misreading by Communist China of statements made recently by the Administration.

As they see it, President Johnson and his associates have been trying to convey an essentially simple message: The United States will not tolerate new Communist aggression in Southeast Asia.

But they also feel that if this is the message, it has been spoken obscurely. Obscurity, they believe, creates the danger of misinterpretation among the American public, in other countries and, most ominously, in Peking.

(In an attempt to clarify the Administration position, Secretary of State Dean Rusk said yesterday that the first objective of U.S. policy is to exploit the possibility of achieving peace in Southeast Asia without extending the fighting.)

The experts unanimously are confident that there has been no threat of nuclear war in the Administration policy statements. But they do not foreclose the possibility that this is the threat mistakenly seen by Peking.

If that is the case, according to one view, the Communists will be constrained to avoid any action that they believe could bring about an atomic attack.

But another reaction among the experts is alarm—a fear that Peking, erroneously expecting an all-out attack in any event, will attempt new offensives. These, the fear is, could broaden the conflict the Administration is presumably trying to contain.

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Johnson, Rusk Try to Make U.S. Determination Clear

Additional possibilities were voiced by the Asian specialists.

One was that the Administration's warnings were not intended to be understood, and that such deliberate obscurity can be fruitful, as was the case with the Quemoy-Matsu crises. The thought here is that a warning of dire consequences, even if murky, has been effectively conveyed.

Yet another possibility cited by the experts was that the Communists will consider the Administration's statements an election-year bluff, one which will leave the United States ultimately confronted with a choice between a great loss of prestige or a great loss of life. The experts, all associated with the Johns Hopkins Uni-

versity School of Advanced International Studies, gave their views to reporters Monday at the School's Washington Center of Foreign Policy Research. One ground rule was that no view be attributed to a particular individual.

The panelists were:

Roger Hillsman, former Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs; Harold C. Hinton, a staff member of the Institute for Defense Analyses; William C. Johnstone Jr., professor of Asian studies, and Paul M. A. Linebarger, a professor of Asiatic politics who for six years was private secretary to the legal adviser of Nationalist China in Nanking and Washington. Chairman of the discussion,

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